

## Layla, the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise's Out-bound RYE Student, Shares Her Experiences during Her First Six Months in Denmark

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Hello Ed,

Thank you so much for reaching out. You are correct; I am having the year of a lifetime! I was welcomed to Hobro with the most open arms, and I could not be more grateful for my placement. I am reminded every day of how lucky I am to have this experience; RYE really is the best program!

I am more than happy to fill everyone in on my past six months. Getting to write it all down is a fun way to re-live and remember all my great adventures.



Host families- I am currently living right in the city with my second host family - host mom and brothers, Anja, Aksel and Karl. Anja owns her own food catering company, so food here is great. The whole house is super busy, but we always make time to have dinner together and we have the best chats. The boys, Aksel and Karl, are 13 year old twins, and polar opposites. Aksel is a very outgoing, energetic, and adventurous boy. Karl is definitely more quiet, a homebody for sure. They are both so sweet. I am so lucky to be here! I am super close with my first host family - host dad, Lasse, mom, Mette, and sisters, Klara and Karoline. Karoline went on exchange to New York last year and had the best time. The house was also always busy, but everyone still managed to be so relaxed! It was such a nice environment to be in, especially when I was still early into my exchange and, expectedly, pretty stressed. I'm really good friends with both of the girls, and will be going to Sweden to ski with the family in February!

School- The school I'm attending is called Mariagerfjord Gymnasium. I believe there's around 700 students at the school, and it is organized into three years. I was placed into the first year, which worked out great since everyone in my class was new to the school on the first day, so I wasn't an odd one out. You're put in a class for the first three months, and then you're required to join another class that specializes in a subject of your choice. I joined the bio-chem class and am loving it. You get quite close with your class here since all of your classes are with the same people for the full three years, so it really turns into a family. I have so many awesome friends here, who I'm so lucky to have. I will write a little section on them after! I really enjoy going to social studies and my beginner-Danish class that I take with the two other exchange students. I'm not the biggest fan of math class here, but my teacher is cool so that makes up for it.



Travel- So far I've only travelled within Denmark, but some of my favourite cities have been Copenhagen, Aalborg, Aarhus. I've only been to Copenhagen three times, but they've all been a blast. I visited the carnival they call "Tivoli" twice and it is fabulous. They have lots of great rides, boutiques, and restaurants. I was able to go and see it while it was all decorated for Christmas. Gorgeous! I've lost track of how many times I've been to Aalborg by now. It's only a 40 minute train ride away and has lots of great stores and places to walk with your friends. So fun when you have no plans! And lastly, we have Aarhus (my favourite)! It is such a beautiful city, full of culture. They have my favourite museum there called ARoS!



The ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum

Activities- As far as official activities and such, I don't really have anything. I spend a lot of time with my friends; there is always something to do! For example, a couple weeks ago my class was free after school, so we all went skating together in Randers. It's so nice how the Danes are so willing to go out and have a great time.



Holidays- As you can imagine, there is no Thanksgiving here which was a bit different for me. My birthday falls right around Thanksgiving so we usually celebrate them both on the Sunday every year, so it was definitely an adjustment without it being a thing. Halloween is also a holiday that isn't really celebrated here, though it is starting to become more popular. Next up is Christmas, and this one was the most different for me of all! It's celebrated on the 24th rather than the 25th, and felt much more relaxed. For example, you sleep in as late as you want because gifts aren't opened until after dinner. You spend time after dinner holding hands and dancing and singing around the tree. A beautiful tradition! Christmas dinner is usually duck or goose roast with various sides. One of the funniest things Danes eat, as a part of the main meal, is gravy poured over potato chips. It sounds silly to have chips as part of the main meal, but it's actually really good! It felt so different from a regular Christmas, that I honestly didn't even realize it was Christmas! It hadn't really sunk in. I was unfortunately sick on New Year's Eve, but still decided to go out and have a nice time with my friends. It's pretty much celebrated the same, though with lots more fireworks here. They're legal to buy around New Years so absolutely everyone has them! It was so pretty, I had an awesome night with everyone.

Host Club- My host club is really great! I'm very close with my counsellor, so we always have a nice time together at the meetings. The Rotarians in the club are all super sweet, though I haven't had the opportunity to talk to everyone as the club doesn't really host events other than their weekly meetings, and it's a fairly big club.

Exciting events- I'm not sure if the news has spread all the way to Canada, but there's been a coronation in Denmark! The queen handed off the crown, and this is the first time that's happened in around 600 years (if I remember correctly). I was able to watch the coronation on live television last weekend, and it was insane! I think the new king is

going to do an amazing job. Around the holidays I attended some very nice "julefrokost" which translates to Christmas lunches. It's just a nice time for people to gather and eat traditional foods.



Friends- I have the absolute best friends here! I was so surprised by how open and welcoming everyone here was to me at the beginning of the year. Danes have been stereotyped to be a little less outgoing, and that you have to reach out to them, never the other way around. Not true at all! On the first day of school I sat with my, now, best friend, Maria. She's the sweetest, silliest, and overall best person out there. When I was in my first class, Maria, and a girl named Karoline (not my host sister), and I formed a very tight group! Maria Karoline joined a different class than Maria and I did, but we all still see each other at lunch and on weekends, etc. My closest friends in my current class are Maria, Klara, Victoria, Emma, and Bella. They're all such sweethearts. In terms of other exchange students, I met another Canadian girl at the intro-camp and clicked instantly. Her name is Jorja, and I'm convinced she's the funniest person on the planet. There's always a smile on my face when she's around!

There have just been so many experiences over the past six months. I had to make sure I didn't miss anything!

Thank you Ed so much for taking the time to do this, I really appreciate it!

**Layla**